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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on how charter schools offer new opportunities for student achievement, parent participation in school governance, and teacher empowerment and freedom. Public charter schools are independent public schools that ensure accountability, offer choices, involve parents, and encourage innovation. The paper describes myths about charter schools (e.g., myths regarding selection of students, student diversity, and student funding). It asserts that charter schools have proven successful by many measures, including their rapid growth nationwide, high participant satisfaction rate, and student achievement. It presents district responses to charter schools (e.g., they provide the incentive, system leverage, and school financing structure to stimulate the public school system to change and make innovative new choices). The paper describes necessary steps toward developing a successful charter school, finding community partners, and financing charter schools. The paper offers statistics on charter schools and lists national contacts, state information resources, state department of education contacts, and publications. (SM)

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THE CHARTER SCHOOL *Experience*

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THE FREEDOM TO BE BETTER

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THE CHARTER SCHOOL Experience

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About this Project

The Charter School Experience has been created by America's Charter under its Charter School Awareness, Outreach and Literacy Program. The goal of this Project is to create opportunities for communities to participate in the charter school movement by increasing awareness of and funding for charter schools. *The Charter School Experience* contains useful and up-to-date information about charter schools and will be distributed to community groups and funding organizations across the country.

Thanks to our Contributors

America's Charter has benefited greatly from the advice and expertise provided to it by The Center for Education Reform, Charter Friends National Network, Education Leaders Council and the National Council of La Raza. In addition, this work would not have come about without the expert assistance of Ember Reichgott Junge, former Minnesota State Senator and author of the nation's first charter school law.

About America's Charter

America's Charter, a nonprofit organization, has a mission to support the creation and expansion of high-quality charter schools throughout the nation by providing them with creative and customized facilities financing options.

THE CHARTER SCHOOL *Experience*

Theresa Wood's 14-year old son Danny was struggling. Ever since he started the eighth grade at the nearby public middle school, his interest in school seemed to wane. He complained that the school didn't offer courses that interested him, and the school was so large, no one seemed to care.

Wood picked up her local daily newspaper. She noted a story where the State Board of Education rated the Charter Academy "#1 in parent satisfaction." Charter Academy parent Charles Saunders' comments caught her eye: "My son never has said to me, 'I don't want to go to school today.' He is full of enthusiasm and now loves learning."

"So, what *is* a charter school?" Wood later asked a colleague at her workplace, a large employer in the city. "Could my son attend one? Could I afford it?"

Wood's colleague, Maria Cervantes, was a former teacher. "Sure, you could afford it. Charter schools are public schools. You don't pay any tuition. We have a growing number of charter schools in our state, and they serve students of all backgrounds and interests. Charter schools have become a real and important public school choice—well over half a million students from kindergarten to twelfth grade are in charter schools right now across our country."

THE CHARTER SCHOOL *Experience*

Cervantes pulled out a card. "Look, why not find out more at this Open House sponsored by the state charter school association?" she suggested. "I'm going. I've often thought of starting a charter school, especially for students who like the arts. But I don't have a clue how to go about it."

"Sure, I'll join you," responded Wood. "But I'm looking for some proof that students do well in charter schools. Aren't they risky?"

"Charter schools have been around about ten years now. They are held to strict performance standards," responded Cervantes. "Charter school parents, teachers, and students seem to be highly satisfied. You should look into it. You have nothing to lose, but your son has a lot to gain."

Why Charter Schools?

Kevin Hunt was just starting his comments at the Open House as the two friends arrived. A father of four children, Hunt became director of the state charter school association after helping to start a charter school in a nearby city.

"Charter schools may not be for everyone," he said. "But they are capturing the energy and creativity of parents and teachers all over the country. The U.S. Department of Education would like to triple the number of students in charter schools over the next five years.

"So, why are so many people across all economic and cultural spectrums attracted to public charter schools?

"For ***Parents***, it's about creating new opportunities for their children and actively participating in the governance of their children's schools. It's about ensuring choices and quality education for all families, regardless of income or place of residence.

"For ***Teachers***, it's about the freedom to be better. Entrepreneurial, innovative teachers are empowered by the freedom to try new learning methods and new ideas. It is being part of the exciting research and development sector of American public education.

"The public school system is into mass production. But every flower doesn't bloom at the same time. Kids come here yearning for special attention."

— Florida Charter School CEO

"For ***Students***, it's about a second chance, a smaller school, more personal attention, a better fit, or a passion for a particular subject. It is about the joy of learning.

"For the ***Community***, it's about strengthening schools and neighborhoods, working together for quality schools and holding them accountable. It is about partnership with business, nonprofits, and community organizations to help children reach their full potential.

"For ***Policymakers***, it's about a dynamic new sector within American public education that stimulates innovation and change at all levels from the smallest charter school to the largest public school district.

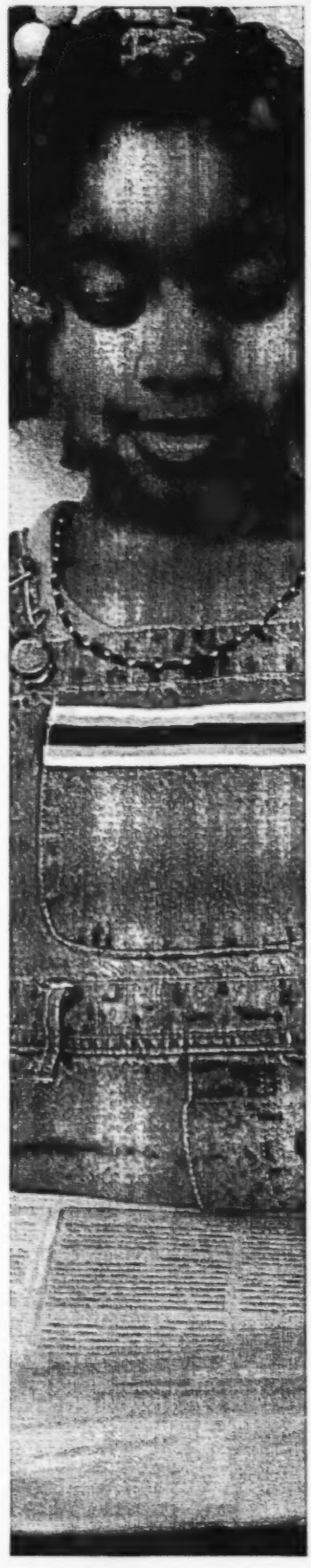
"For charter school ***Authorizers*** (organizations that approve charter applications like school boards, universities, or state boards of education), it's about serving students falling through the cracks or whose needs can be better met in a smaller school setting. And sometimes it means discovering new innovations that can be used in the district public schools."

Hunt paused. "In short, charter schools tear down the traditional school models and allow citizens to take the lead. Fresh new ideas for learning just keep on coming from parents and teachers like you."

"How did charter schools get started?" asked a parent.

"Charter schools began in Minnesota in 1991," replied Hunt, the association director. "They were a way to offer students a choice of new and different public schools. Legislators of both parties joined together to provide an opportunity for someone *other than the local school board* to create and run a public school. It was a pretty important change. The charter school law was once described by the governor of New York as 'the single greatest education reform in state history.'

"Charter school legislation originally passed because some parents were dissatisfied with low test scores and high drop out rates in their children's public schools. Policymakers knew they had to do something bold and immediate to make public education more responsive to student and parent needs. Public charter schools were proposed not as an indictment of the public school system, but as a tool to help educators do their job better in times of scarce resources and demanding social agendas."



THE CHARTER SCHOOL Experience

What are Public Charter Schools?

"Can someone describe a charter school for me?" asked a parent who was new to the charter school idea.

"Very simply, charter schools are independent public schools," replied association director Hunt. "They are designed and operated *not* by the local school district, but by a group of founders like parents, educators, and community leaders. Founders must obtain a *charter*—the specific contractual authority to run the charter school—from an *authorizer* established under their state's law, such as a college, state chartering board, or local school board. Public school funding follows the students enrolled in the charter school, and founders have a great deal of independence to decide the school's budget, staff, curriculum and teaching methods. In many states, charter schools are exempt from most state and local regulation, with important exceptions like laws and rules dealing with health and safety, special education and civil rights.

"Though independent, charter schools ensure accountability. Schools must meet strict academic performance standards and other goals agreed to in the charter, and must successfully manage school finances and operations. It's simple: no results, no charter. If charter schools don't perform, they are closed. That's *greater* accountability than is generally required of district public schools.

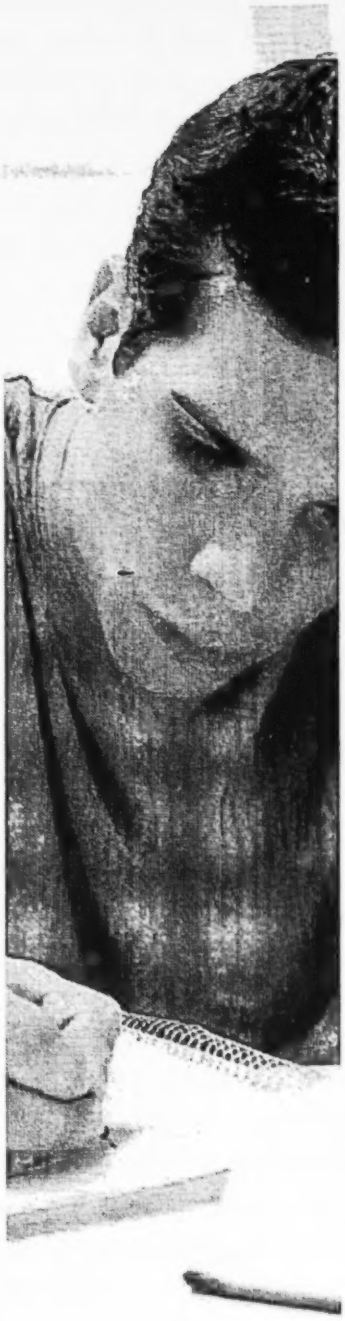
"Charter schools offer different choices within public education. Charter schools are all of these: one grade or 12 grades; year-round or extended-days; back-to-basics or state-of-the-art technology; environmental mission or arts focus; business/labor partnership; specialized teaching strategies; priority for special needs students; or use of culturally appropriate curricula.

"Charter schools expect parents to be involved. It is not unusual to see parents painting the school corridors or laying the carpet before the charter school opens. Some schools require parents to volunteer a certain number of hours at the school; and others have parents sign contracts committing them to read aloud to their children or review their homework at home.

"Charter schools offer opportunities to innovate. Have all successful learning strategies been developed? Of course not. Since the average size of charter schools is small (about 250 students), the opportunity to innovate is

"It doesn't look like school. It looks like learning."

— Sign on a charter school door



greater. Thomas Peters, author of *In Search of Excellence,* observed that large organizations are seldom responsible for major advances in their industries. One national science foundation study he referenced found that small firms produced 24 times as many innovations per research dollar as large firms."

Charter School Innovation: Learning through Music

Music pervades every aspect of the curriculum of the Children's Choir Campus of the Global Village Charter School in Chicago, Illinois. Imagine 136 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders of diverse background and city residence using art and music as vehicles for academic learning and personal growth:

★ Teachers teach fractions through musical rhythm.

★ Students study the physics of sound in science.

★ Students learn culture and history by delving into the creation and meaning of songs around the world.

Is Your State Friendly to Charter Schools?

"Our state has lots of charter schools, but some of our neighboring states do not. Why is that?" asked Wood.

"Charter schools are an option decided by each state legislature," replied Hunt. "More than three-quarters of our 50 states have charter school laws. Each law is different, and some state laws generate more charter school activity than others. Those states with lots of charter schools usually have laws that provide two things: (1) significant legal autonomy for charter schools; and (2) several chartering authorities *beyond* the local school board or, at a minimum, an appeals process to some other public body."

Charter schools flourish in states with multiple chartering authorities:

★ States with multiple chartering authorities or a strong appeals process have an average of 80.8 charters per state.

★ States that limit approval of charter schools to local school boards have an average of 9.6 charters per state.

★ Only 5.6% of the nation's charter schools are in the 12 states that require local school boards to approve charter school applications.

★ Overall, 57% of charters are granted by authorities other than local school boards.

Center for Education Reform 2000-2001 Charter School Survey ("CER Survey")

What are the Myths of Charter Schools?

Cervantes raised her hand. "As a teacher, I'm concerned about who chooses the students who attend the charter school. What's to prevent them from picking only the students they want? Do students attending charter schools reflect the same diversity as the district public schools?" she asked.

"Charter schools cannot 'select' their students," replied Hunt. "State law is clear that like other public schools, charter schools are nonsectarian and nondiscriminatory in admission and employment practices. Charter school students are admitted on a first-come, first-served basis, or by lottery when applicants exceed available slots. No tuition may be charged.

"National surveys also show that charter schools serve diverse student populations," replied Hunt. "Often they serve economically and culturally diverse student populations with equal or greater diversity as school districts around them. Only about 10 percent of charters identify 'gifted and talented students' as a target population to be served. And significant numbers of students with disabilities are also served in charter schools."

Charter school students are like other public school students:

★ Nearly 60% of charters serve a student population where more than 40% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

★ More than half of charters serve a student population where more than 40% of students are minorities.

★ Nearly half of charters serve a student population where more than 40% of students are considered at-risk or are former dropouts.

CER Survey

"The innovation is in the expectation."

— Kristin Kearns Jordan, founder of the Bronx Preparatory Charter School

"I understand that charter schools can't charge tuition or pre-select their students. But they still seem like private schools to me," said Cervantes. "What makes charter schools public schools rather than a voucher plan for private schools?"

"**Charter schools are very different from private school vouchers,**" responded Hunt. "I'm glad you asked, because while both are examples of school choice, the two are often confused. Voucher plans allow parents to use their tax dollars that would otherwise be used to educate their child in a public school and apply those dollars toward tuition at a private or religious school. These schools may charge some amount beyond the voucher and may not have to accept all applicants, depending on the voucher program guidelines. Charter schools, on the other hand, are public schools that allow parents to exercise an option to have their child educated at a school outside of the traditional district system. Charter schools must accept all students on a first-come-first-served basis or by lottery, and cannot charge tuition. Both options allow parents to choose the education environment that best fits their child, but charter schools do so solely within a public school context."

A public school teacher in the back of the room looked puzzled. "All right, I understand charter schools are not private schools," he said. "But aren't charter schools harmful to other public schools, by diverting resources from them?"

"**While state and local operating funds do indeed follow the student to the charter school, so does the expense of educating that student,**" responded Hunt. "While state laws vary, for every student in public school, our state allocates a certain amount of funding for the education of that student. These monies follow the student they are intended to educate from one public school to the next. If a student moves from one school district to another, the funds the first district received for that student are transferred to the new district. The same thing happens when a child enrolls in one of our state's charter schools."

"As a former leader in my teacher's union, I'm wondering if charter schools weaken the union," said Cervantes. "What protection do teachers have in charter schools?"

"Teachers of a charter school may choose to organize with a union," replied Hunt. "The number of charter school members in the teachers' unions continues to grow. In some states, unions are even involved in seeking charters. Also, some state laws reduce the risk for teachers to try a charter

school by allowing them to return to their original district within a limited number of years."

Charter School Innovation: Teacher Cooperatives

New Country Charter School at Henderson, Minnesota receives instructional services from EdVisions, a teachers' cooperative. Owned and supported by educators, the cooperative delivers teaching services on contract to the charter school and other public schools. This innovative cooperative provides new opportunities for teacher entrepreneurs to create new educational programs in their own communities. In partnership with the Gates Foundation, the Gates-EdVision Project calls for the creation of 15 new charter schools based on the model in place at New Country Charter School. Six new schools were up and running in the first year of this project.

Do Charter Schools Work?

"I think my son would do well in a small charter school, particularly with emphasis on technical skills," said Wood. "But what proof do you have that charter schools work? Aren't they risky for some students?"

"Charter schools have proven successful by many measures," replied Hunt. "Their rapid growth throughout the country is one. Their high rate of parent, teacher and student satisfaction is another. Student achievement is another.

"Charter schools, by their unique nature, encourage educators to look beyond standardized test scores as sole proof of student success. Every charter is different, and many of them are new. But their general success is consistent. An August, 2001 report from the Center for Education Reform found that of 65 research studies done on charter schools, 61 found that charters overall proved innovative, accountable and successful. That's quite a record.

"Of course, a few charter schools fail. Poor academic performance can be a factor, but most failures are due to financial and management issues. When a charter school fails, it closes. It should close. Less than five percent of charter schools nationally have closed." *(CER Survey)*

"The real constraint on the growth of charter schools is not parental demand, it's the availability of school founders ready, willing, and able to come forward."

— James A. Peyser, Chair, Massachusetts Board of Education; Boston Herald, April 3, 2002

Rapid Growth of Charter Schools

"So, let's take a closer look at the measures of success of charter schools. You can't ignore their **rapid growth** since 1992, when the first charter school opened in St. Paul with just 40 students. Who would have guessed that a decade later there would be over 2400 charter schools operating in 34 states and the District of Columbia, serving nearly 600,000 students?

"There are many reasons why parents and teachers continue to form these charter schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education (USED), the founders of nearly two-thirds of newly created charter schools seek an alternative vision of schooling. An additional quarter of them are founded primarily to serve a special target population of students."

Why do parents and teachers start charter schools?

Parents' top reasons (some multiple) for choosing charter schools include:

Small size	53.0%
Higher standards	45.9%
Educational philosophy	44.0%
Greater parental involvement	43.0%
Better teachers	41.9%

Teachers' top reasons (some multiple) for choosing charter schools include:

Educational philosophy	76.8%
Desire for a new school	64.8%
Like-minded colleagues	62.9%
Good administrators	54.6%
Class size	54.2%

Vanourek, Manno, et. al. June, 1997; Hudson Institute Report, Part I (Hudson I)

"Has the growth of charter schools kept up with the demand for them? " asked a parent.

"Not really," replied Hunt. "The USED finds that nationally, seven of ten charter schools report a waiting list. Nationally, the total number of students on all such waiting lists is enough to fill another 1,000 average-sized charter schools.

High Satisfaction Rates

"This demand is generated in part by the **consistently high satisfaction rates** among charter school parents, teachers and students. These rates often exceed the satisfaction rates of parents of children in district schools. That, in itself, is an important measure of success."

Charter schools generate high satisfaction rates:

Parental satisfaction:

★ In Arizona, the satisfaction rate of charter school parents was 60% higher than the rate for parents of children in traditional schools. Sixty-four percent of charter parents in Arizona graded their child's school "A" or "A+," while only 36% of parents in district schools gave their schools those grades. *(Goldwater Institute 2000).*

★ A 1997 national study found that: "[o]ver two-thirds of parents say their charter school is better than their child's previous school with respect to class size, school size, and individual attention from teachers. Over three-fifths say it is better with respect to teaching quality, parental involvement, curriculum, extra help for students, academic standards, accessibility and openness and discipline." *(Hudson I).*

★ "About two-thirds of parents (of special needs children) think their charter school is better than schools their children would otherwise attend, when it came to curriculum, quality of teaching, providing extra help, and parental involvement." *(Hudson I).*

Student satisfaction:

★ "Three-fifths of students reported their charter teachers were better than their previous schools' teachers." *(Hudson I).*

Teacher satisfaction:

★ Charter school teachers find personal fulfillment, empowerment, and professional reward. "Over 90% of teachers are 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with their charter school's educational philosophy, size, fellow teachers

"Charter schools are helping to boost accountability, public school choice, and most importantly, student achievement."

— Richard Riley, former U.S. Secretary of Education

and students. Over 75% are satisfied with their school administrators, level of teacher decision-making, and challenge of starting a new school. Only 2.7% of charter school teachers say they 'hope to be elsewhere' next year." *(Hudson I).*

"Growth rates and high satisfaction rates are important. But how can I be sure, as a parent, that charter school students achieve academically? Isn't that the bottom line?" asked Wood

Academic Success

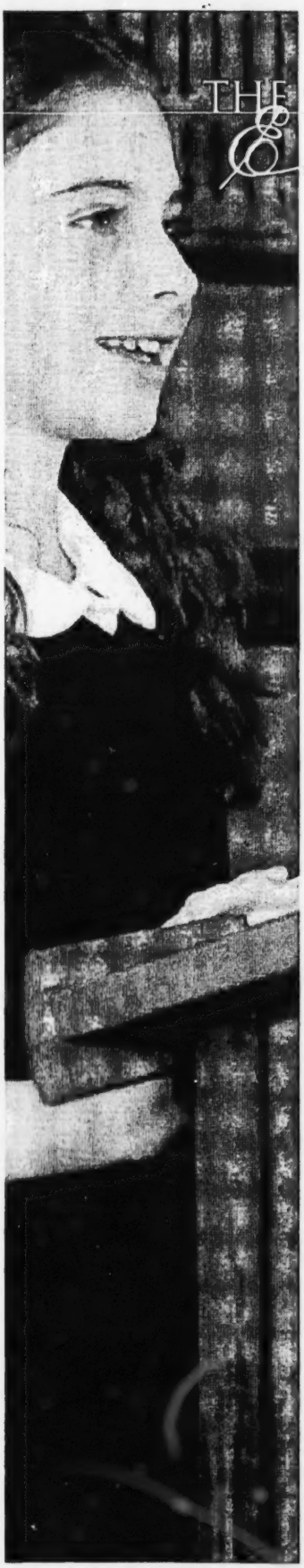
"There is a lot of evidence of academic achievement in charter schools," said Hunt. "Although charter schools often accept students who have been performing substantially below grade level, they do report strong academic improvements and successes *(CER Survey)*. Wide-ranging studies report improvements for children of all ages, races, genders, income levels and special needs, whether from public, private or home schools. For example, a three-year study of California charter schools released in March 2002 by California State University, Los Angeles, found that for schools that serve between 50 and 74 percent free or reduced-lunch students, the scores in 16 charter schools improved 22.6 percent compared to 19.4 percent for 1,461 non-charter schools. The study also found that charter schools serve a higher proportion of low-income students than traditional schools. According to the study's lead author, Simeon Slovacek, 'They are catching up faster in charter schools than in regular schools.'"

Charter School Student Achievement: Many success stories

★ At Einstein Montessori School in Gainesville, Florida, which serves students with dyslexia, average student yearly gains were 14 months, as compared to the three-month gains previously experienced by these students when enrolled in traditional public schools.

★ The Accelerated School in Los Angeles, California (a Time magazine 2001 "School of the Year"), posted a 97% gain in Stanford 9 scores from 1997 to 2001. The school's 2001 reading and math scores are three times higher than those of children in their cluster of neighborhood schools.

★ At Colin Powell Academy, Detroit, Michigan, fourth grade reading scores on the Michigan standardized test improved tremendously. In 1998, 30% of the students scored in the "low" category, as compared with only 6.5% in 2001.



THE CHARTER SCHOOL *Experience*

★ In North Carolina, four out of the top five schools on the 2000-2001 State Reading exam were charter schools. These schools were Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy, Raleigh Charter High School, the Woods Charter School and Quest Academy.

★ In Waco, Texas, Rapoport Charter School founders were dismayed with the 30% third-grade pass rate on the state assessment exam for students in their district. Within a few years, 100% of the third-graders at Rapoport passed the Texas state exam.

★ At the Community Day Charter School in Lowell, Massachusetts, fourth-grade students performed between eight and fifteen points higher and eighth-grade students performed between 18 and 26 points higher than students in the neighboring district schools on the state-mandated achievement exams for 2000.

★ A 2002 study released by the Chicago public schools found that "all but two of Chicago's charter schools are outperforming their neighborhood schools on nearly every one of seventy different measures—from reading and math scores to attendance to dropout rates." (*Chicago Tribune* editorial, April 1, 2002.)

Do District Schools Respond to Charter Schools?

The President of the Chamber of Commerce, John Benson, raised his hand. "I don't have children of my own. I do own a company that needs qualified workers. I'm pleased that charter schools are re-energizing public education. But shouldn't we be providing those same opportunities to all children in the public schools?"

"Public charter schools have an impact far beyond their own students. They move the district system forward," replied Hunt. "Charter schools provide the incentive, the system leverage, and the school financing structure to stimulate the public school system to change and make innovative new choices.

"In 2001, the U.S Department of Education released a major study called *The Impact of Charter Schools on School Districts*. They reported that *more than half* of traditional districts created new educational programs in response to charter schools. All-day or extended-day kindergarten classes were the most

"Ultimately, the challenge for us is to make all schools comparable in those ways to charter schools."

— Paul Buchanan, President of Buffalo NY Board of Education, praising charter schools for their decentralization, parent involvement, and individual student attention. Buffalo News, May 30, 2001

common response by districts. But districts also offered new classes or initiatives like music or art, programs for gifted or at-risk youth, character education, or after-school programs. Nearly one-fourth of the traditional districts responded to charters by opening new schools, often designed to serve specific student needs.

"There are other impacts on districts. Charters affected accountability in almost four of five traditional districts, often meaning that districts paid closer attention to test results. About 45 percent of traditional district leaders reported becoming more 'customer-service oriented.' And about 40% said they communicate more with parents."

Charter schools strengthen community voices:

Parents in Mesa, Arizona lobbied for many years to convince the school district to open an "alternative" school with a back-to-basics curriculum. The passing of Arizona's charter school law in 1994 finally allowed them the means to move past the alternative school concept and create a charter school that met their needs. Now, the Benjamin Franklin Charter School enrolls over 1,500 students on three campuses. Students at the school are scoring in the top ten percent of all Arizona schools on state-wide tests. In response to the popularity of these charter schools, the district has finally implemented a back-to-basics curriculum in four of its schools.

Can YOU Start a Charter School?

Charter School Association Director Kevin Hunt was presenting the second seminar of his information series on charter schools. He was pleased with the interest from last month's introductory open house. Several attendees returned for more detailed information. They wanted to learn about the "nuts and bolts" of starting a charter school.

Chamber of Commerce President John Benson was interested in creating a charter school focusing on technical skills. Benson needed more skilled workers for his business. Theresa Wood thought her son, Danny, would thrive in such a school. Both wanted to move forward, but neither was an educator.

"How long does it take to start a charter school?" they asked Hunt. "Where do you go for help?"

THE CHARTER SCHOOL *experience*

"**Starting a charter school is not easy. It can take a year or more to plan the vision, strategy and design of a charter school,**" began Hunt. **"Many states have charter school resource centers or charter school membership associations which provide technical assistance to charter school applicants.** These groups are familiar with specific state charter school laws and can offer guidance in drafting charter applications and supporting documents. They offer advice in overcoming specific challenges such as facilities, special education and performance measures. In addition, many "How To" guides and checklists on planning and operating charter schools have been published by state, regional and national support organizations and are available on the web.

"Depending on state law, **applicants for charter schools can be parents, teachers, public schools, community groups or universities**, among others. In all states but Arizona, the charter must be granted to a nonprofit organization, public agency or cooperative. Most charter schools are started from scratch. But, existing district schools may also be converted into charter schools. And some states also allow private school conversions.

"A large majority of charter school boards hire their own administrators, teachers and other employees. But some charters find it beneficial to contract for management or other services from a for-profit or nonprofit **educational management organization** or 'EMO'. Some EMOs will tailor services to a curriculum that schools have already selected. Others bring parts or all of their own curriculum, often with a special emphasis on technology, a longer school day or year, or other features not available in nearby district public schools.

"Many charters also **contract for a variety of other services** usually provided by school districts, including transportation, food service, special education, payroll and insurance management, curriculum specialists and maintenance services. Or they might purchase some or all of these services from the authorizing school district or from the district where the charter school is located. Some applicants prefer to purchase a comprehensive school reform model reflecting their mission and goals. Others design their curriculum and instructional strategies from scratch."

"No doubt about it. The charter school was the spark for much of the instructional innovation that has gone on in the district the last two years."

— California school district superintendent (Hudson I)

The Road to Successful Charters

Phase I: Planning Stage. This exploration phase involves surveying the options and laying the groundwork. Important planning steps include:

- ★ conducting surveys and focus groups in the community;
- ★ developing a mission statement for a charter school;
- ★ preparing a comprehensive business plan and budget;
- ★ creating community support and partnerships (including in-kind assistance);
- ★ establishing an advisory/founding board;
- ★ assembling a school design team and framework;
- ★ understanding state laws and rules regarding charter schools;
- ★ developing legal documents such as articles of incorporation and by-laws;
- ★ applying for tax-exempt status, if required;
- ★ conducting site visits to existing schools; and
- ★ preparing grant applications.

Phase II: Application Stage. This critical stage involves writing and negotiating the terms of an actual charter document and applying to a charter authorizer for approval. Obtaining approval from a charter school authorizer is key, and could be time-sensitive if a fall school opening is planned. Some states allow an appeals process to a different authorizer if a charter is denied. Once approved, a charter contract must be negotiated with the authorizer, including specific accountability and performance standards.

Phase III: Pre-Operations Stage. A detailed implementation plan is developed as the school is prepared for opening. Key school leadership and faculty are ideally hired at least six months in advance of school opening, and governance structures are formalized. Curriculum, instructional strategies, assessment, accountability measures, school calendar, and staff development plans are finalized. A suitable facility is secured in an appropriate location, and financing or lease terms are negotiated. Equipment and textbooks are purchased, and teachers and employees hired. A marketing plan to recruit students is implemented, and students are enrolled as early as possible prior to opening. Transportation, health, special education, extracurricular activities, school lunch and other support service issues are addressed. Community partnerships are cultivated and formalized.

Phase IV: Operations Stage. The school opens its doors and operational problems are identified and addressed. The school culture is established around the school's mission, expectations, and beliefs. The school governance board transitions to policy-making and oversight functions. New and continuing relationships with community organizations, partnering organizations, and other stakeholders are nurtured. Student performance data is structured for assessment and policymaking decisions.

Can We Find Community Partners for Our Charter School?

"If we start a charter school in the urban center, the challenges could be endless. We need partners who understand the community and its specific social and economic challenges. Who can we turn to?" Chamber President Benson asked.

Community Based Partners

"You might want to partner with the local YMCA, Urban League, or other community-based nonprofit organization (CBO)," replied Hunt. "Some national nonprofit organizations are actively promoting development of charter schools by their regional and local affiliates, because they see charter schools as helpful to their core missions, like eliminating poverty. This is a significant trend in the growth of the charter school sector.

"The charter school may involve the CBO in a variety of ways. CBOs could lead the planning and design process, participate in community coalitions that plan and launch charter schools, operate the charter school, or provide ongoing support like funding and facilities to the charter school.

"Partnership with CBOs may provide many benefits. CBOs can tap into their local community ties and deep-rooted community reputations to develop credibility for the charter school. The charter school can realize cost savings through shared staff and facilities with the CBO. Charters can take advantage of the marketing, public relations, and fundraising expertise of the established CBO, as well as existing banking relationships for obtaining facility capital. Charters may receive direct subsidies from the CBO during the critical start-up years.

"Thoughtful schools are never the product of mere replication."

— Charter teacher James Nehring, Commentary, Education Week, August 2, 2000

"Here are a few examples of active CBOs:

★ **YMCA of the USA.** The YMCA focus on charter school development has reinvigorated a long history of YMCA involvement in education. It is part of the YMCA Strong Communities Agenda, a national strategy assisting local YMCA's in expanding their work with children and families in low income, underserved and disadvantaged communities.

★ **National Urban League.** This community-based movement focuses on empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. They serve as an information clearinghouse for affiliates interested in starting charter schools. Local Urban Leagues have initiated charter schools in several cities including Pittsburgh, PA; Springfield, MA; Canton, OH; San Diego, CA; Milwaukee, WI; and Detroit, MI.

★ **National Council of La Raza (NCLR).** This private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization works to reduce poverty and discrimination and improve life opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through their national Charter School Development Initiative, NCLR seeks to empower Latino-serving, community-based organizations to open new charter schools and improve the offering, operations and performance of existing affiliated charter schools. They expect to help create up to 50 new affiliate charter schools by 2005, as well as assist their 22 current affiliates. They provide grants for planning, pre-opening, first-year operations, and follow-up operations."

Charter School Innovation: CBO-Linked Charter Schools

★ *Passage Charter School* in Montrose, Colorado, was developed by the Delta-Montrose Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative in cooperation with Montrose Memorial Hospital. With a childcare center on site, this rural school serves the needs of students who are pregnant or parenting teens, with core academics, job preparation, and parenting skills.

★ *The Noble Street Charter School* in Chicago, Illinois, partners with the Northwestern University Settlement Association, a century-old social service agency. The charter school was formed to counter the regression of children who transitioned from the agency's Head Start program to local public elementary schools. The charter school uses facilities owned by the settlement house and contracts with them for a range of management and support services.

The Charter School Experience

★ *The YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School* in Pennsylvania operates under the national YouthBuild model and offers unemployed youth ages 18 to 21 a combination of academic skills, construction skills, job training and leadership development. Young adults who have dropped out of school spend every other week on a construction site learning important skills as they rehabilitate buildings.

★ *The YWCA Global Career Academy* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin is a school for girls and young women with emphasis on nontraditional career opportunities. The school was born out of YWCA staff alarm at the high rates of student suspension and expulsion in Milwaukee Public Schools, coupled with needs the YWCA identified from their training initiative for low-income women preparing for non-traditional building trades.

Employer Partners

"CBO-linked charter schools have addressed wide-ranging community needs around the country, but there are also other prospective partners for charter schools. We are seeing more employer-linked charter schools. Your chamber of commerce might be particularly interested in this, Mr. Benson. Employer-linked charter schools are partnerships where an employer organization or network collaborates with educational leaders to develop and operate an educational program to prepare students for the work world.

Developer Partners

"Charter schools represent an entirely new and often more flexible option for housing developers who must address the need for school facilities in their new developments. In some states, the developers have joined in partnership with a charter school in which they provide the land and facility, while the school provides the educational service. These arrangements can include commitments to the resident city for long-term use of the property as a school to ensure the provision of education. Even when the developer partner option is not ultimately used in a new development, it creates a healthy competition among school providers and ensures that the local school district does not need to be the sole provider if they are unable or are overly costly."

How Do You Finance a Charter School?

"You can have willing community partners, but you still need enough money to establish and operate a charter school," said Chamber President Benson.

"Giving a good, solid, traditional education is innovative today."

— Michigan charter school founder (Hudson I)

"Are state education dollars enough to run a charter school?"

The Funding Gap

"**Charter schools must still do more with less,"** replied Hunt. "Although public school 'per pupil' funding follows the student to the charter school, charter schools typically do not receive all the additional sources of funding that other public schools receive.

"Some state legislatures have acknowledged this gap by extending other types of public funding sources to charter schools. Some of these have included transportation revenue, special revenue for schools with high numbers of free or reduced lunch students, special education subsidies, facilities revenue, start-up funding and integration aid.

"Still, funding constitutes the major barrier for most charter school applicants. Fewer than one-fifth of charter schools receive capital budget funds, including purchase or renovation of facilities. Charter schools generally do not receive property tax revenues from voter-approved property tax referenda. Lack of planning funds during the pre-student enrollment stage is a frequent barrier to charter school development. Early operating funds can also be a challenge.

"But please don't be discouraged. There are resources to turn to for help.

Start-Up Funding

"Lawmakers recognized early on that **charter schools have a special need for funding the planning stage prior to student enrollment.** Charters are unique in their need for planning money or 'start-up' grants to fund planning efforts inherent in starting a new school. In 1994, a federal program funding charter school start-ups was established by Congress with bipartisan support. Each year this source provides about $200 million to charter schools around the country. Many states complement this start-up funding with state dollars. Private, nonprofit, and foundation resources have also recognized this funding gap, and local and national business communities have been financially generous in helping new schools establish quality programs. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education reported progress in meeting this need, with a lower percentage of charter schools citing start-up funding as problematic.

Facilities Funding

"**Funding charter school facilities, however, remains a huge challenge.** Preparing a building for a charter school is expensive. As researched by the Charter Friends National Network (CFNN), the relatively new concept of charter schools may appear risky, so lenders and investors charge a premium for any financing they provide. In many states, charter schools lack access to tax-exempt financing, a mechanism that helps hold down costs for district schools."

Charter School Financing Innovation: Facilities Challenges

An April, 2001 survey of about 280 charter schools conducted by CFNN and Ksixteen provides a national systemic look at the facilities challenges charter schools face. Their findings include:

★ *Free facilities rare:* Only about 13% of charter schools report they inhabit no-cost facilities or pay token amounts.

★ *Facilities use substantial resources:* The average annual payment for leases and loans is $191,553, or about 12% of the charter school budget. This amounts to an average of $690 per student per year. Some schools spend 20% of their budget or more to pay for facilities.

★ *Most schools lease:* More than 70% of schools lease their facilities. Fewer than 20% own their buildings, and the remaining schools have other arrangements, typically occupying a district school building.

★ *Creative arrangements:* Three in four charter school facilities fell into one of the following categories: custom built facilities; pre-existing public school buildings; offices; retail space, like strip malls; former private school buildings; or places of worship. Other schools have located in community buildings; college/university buildings; warehouses, and factories.

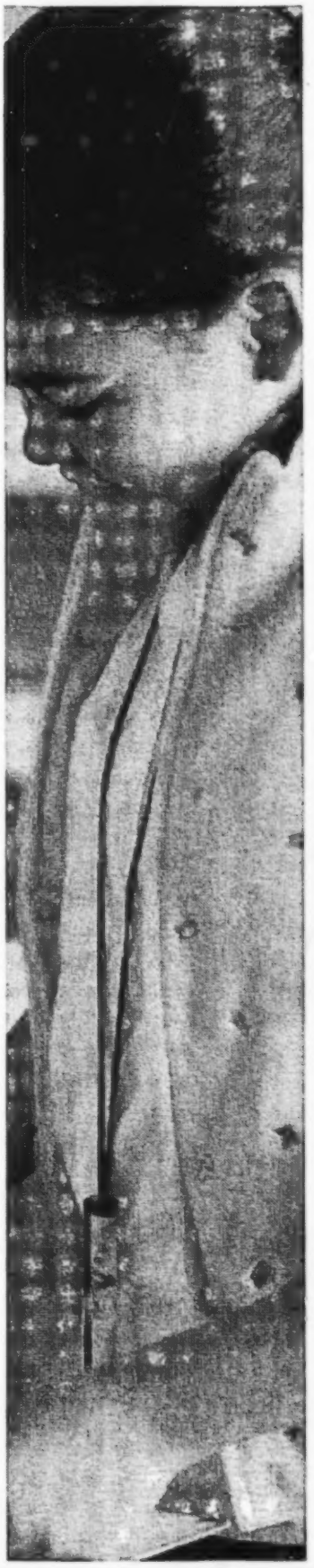
★ *Sizes Vary:* The average school occupies 27,700 square feet, or 103 square feet per student. However, schools range in size from 1,800 to 150,000 square feet.

★ *Financing Takes Time:* It is not uncommon for it to take four to six months to secure financing for a facility. For nearly 10% of schools, it took more than 18 months.

★ *Many financing strategies:* Charter schools generally choose to purchase, construct, mortgage and/or renovate their facilities. Financing terms can be as short as one year or as long as 30 years. While most charter schools

Philadelphia area mother Barbara Chandler Allen calls the charter school experience "the most empowering thing she or her son has lived through."

– U.S. News and World Report, October 9, 2000



have arranged their financing from traditional sources of corporate lending including bank loans, landlords, and bond proceeds, some schools have also accessed funds from government sources such as the Department of Agriculture and the Small Business Administration. Some schools must use their start-up or operational funds, and still others rely on donations and fundraising.

Facilities Finance Resources

"Where can you go for help to finance facilities for charter schools?" asked Benson.

"Many surveys and resource guides on facility financing sources and creative financing strategies are available on the web," replied Hunt. "Policymakers at all levels are exploring school facilities financing solutions, and charter applicants should check resources available to them at the state, federal, and local levels. Many charter school associations have actively partnered with policymakers to develop new financing options. Let me give you some examples:

- *State initiatives:* In Minnesota, the legislature authorized a 'lease aid' initiative that provides $1500 per pupil in lease aid (in addition to operating costs). In Ohio, the legislature appropriated funding to a loan guarantee pool for Ohio's charter schools, enabling the state school facilities commission to provide security for loans taken out by charter schools. Other states are authorizing new or existing public agencies to sell tax-exempt bonds for charter school facilities or creating other programs to make financing both more affordable and accessible for charter school founders and operators.
- *Federal initiatives:* The U.S. Department of Education Charter Schools Facilities Financing Demonstration Program has awarded five one-time grants totaling $25.0 million to test innovative credit enhancement or other initiatives that assist charter schools achieve, construct or renovate facilities. Congress has also authorized a matching grant program to encourage states to establish programs to provide 'per pupil' facilities aid to charter schools, on top of their operating revenues.
- *Local initiatives:* According to the Illinois-based Leadership for Quality Education, 'the Chicago Public School System was the first in the nation to provide a major grant to create a low-interest revolving loan fund for charter facility and start-up needs. The $2 million fund is managed by the Illinois Facilities Fund, a nonprofit community development financial institution.'"

Should You Travel the Charter School Road?

"It takes a special team with entrepreneurial leaders to start a charter school," concluded Hunt. "It is tough. But rewards are great, too. Teachers are empowered by the freedom to try exciting new learning strategies. Parents have a vision they think will work for their children. Parents and teachers feel a sense of ownership that often results in increased involvement and higher student achievement. And enthusiastic charter school students are known to stay at school long after the day is over.

"Is it worth it? Just ask the parents, teachers, and students who have done it."

"I was actually at a point where I was wondering if I needed to find a new profession. This place has given me renewed hope for working as a teacher."

— Lee Mensay, 20-year teacher, currently teaches at Edu-Prize; Scottsdale Tribune, April, 2002

"The teachers are great and I'm learning so much. They don't just spend a week skimming a chapter in a book, giving a test, and moving on. We really spend time on learning and in the end I understand what was taught."

— Massachusetts charter school student, age 15 (Hudson I)

"I feel like I'm a sponge. I'm always soaking up something new, something interesting, something challenging. I really feel free to use my professional judgment in a way that's never happened before this school."

— California charter school teacher (Hudson I)

"I get the same message loud and clear from each teacher: We've set world-class standards for all of you and we expect all of you to work hard to reach them."

— Massachusetts charter school student (Hudson I)

"I can only say without hesitation that this school has been instrumental in helping my bright, funny daughter achieve her own unique 'human potential' and its effect on her life has been little short of miraculous."

— Florida charter school parent

639 Granite Street, Suite 310
Braintree, MA 02184
(781)849-8420

www.americascharter.org

THE CHARTER SCHOOL
Experience

Statistics on Charter Schools

★ Charter schools are public schools and serve all students.

★ For the 2001-2002 school year, nearly 600,000 students attended more than 2,400 charter schools in 34 states and the District of Columbia. During the 2002-2003 school year, 450 new charter schools are scheduled to open, expanding to 36 states and the District of Columbia.

★ Nearly two-thirds of charter schools nationwide have waiting lists. There are enough students on charter school waiting lists to fill another 1,000 charter schools.

★ Charter schools tend to be smaller than traditional public schools – the average enrollment in a charter school is about 250 students, compared to 475 in traditional public schools.

★ Nearly 60 percent of charter schools serve a population in which more than 40 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

★ More than half of all charter schools have enrollments that are more than 40 percent students of color.

★ Nearly half of all charters serve a population in which more than 40 percent of students are considered at-risk or are former dropouts.

★ Charter schools are making an impact on traditional public schools. School district leaders are becoming more customer-service oriented and communicate more with parents as a result of competition from charter schools. More than half of the traditional districts created new educational programs and nearly one-fourth responded to charters by opening new schools, often designed to serve distinctive student needs.

Source: The foregoing information was compiled from reports and studies completed by the United States Department of Education, The Center for Education Reform, and Charter Friends National Network.

THE CHARTER SCHOOL Experience

National Charter School Informational Resources

U.S. Department of Education Charter School Web Site
www.uscharterschools.org

Site provides many useful reports and links for charter school statistics and research reports, planning guides, funding information, charter applications, and other useful documents.

The Center for Education Reform
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 204
Washington, DC 20036
202-822-9000
www.edreform.com

The Center for Education Reform supports a number of reform initiatives, including charter schools. The organization provides many useful charter school resources including a review and ranking of state laws pertaining to charter schools, a national charter school directory, and a workbook to serve as a roadmap for developing a charter school.

Charter Friends National Network
1295 Bandana Boulevard, Suite 165
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108
651-644-6115
www.charterfriends.org

Charter Friends National Network's mission is to promote quality charter schools by connecting and supporting resource centers, charter school associations and other grassroots charter support organizations. CFNN provides a wide range of resource guides on all aspects of charter school development, accountability, finance, and operation.

Education Leaders Council
1225 19th Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
202-261-2600
www.educationleaders.org

The Education Leaders Council is a national organization of practicing education reformers committed to increasing student achievment, providing families with educational options, and ensuring rigorous accountability. The ELC web site provides information on reform initatives from around the nation.

National Association of Charter School Authorizers
1125 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-683-9701
www.charterauthorizers.org

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers is a nonprofit membership association of educational agencies across the country that authorize and oversee public charter schools. The web site includes an easy-to-use resource library with information on a variety of topics.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation
1627 K Street, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006
202-223-5452
www.edexcellence.net

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation supports research, publications, and action projects of national significance in elementary and secondary education reform. The web site includes a number of charter school research reports, as well as information on accountability, teacher quality and other initiatives.

THE CHARTER SCHOOL Experience

Charter School Publications

Note: In addition to the following publications, many state-based organizations publish excellent state-specific resources. Refer to the State-by-State Charter School Informational and State Department of Education Resources tabs for contact information.

Accountability and Assessment

Accountability for Student Performance: An Annotated Resource Guide for Shaping an Accountability Plan for Your Charter School
Charter Friends National Network
www.charterfriends.org/accountability.doc

Filling in the Blanks: Putting Standardized Tests to the Test
Thomas B. Fordham Foundation
www.edexcellence.net/library/cizek.pdf

Accountability: The Key to Charter Renewal - A Guide to Help Charter Schools Create Their Accountability Plans
Center for Education Reform
www.edreform.com/pubs/charter_school_accountability.htm

A Study Of Charter School Accountability- National Charter School Accountability Study
University of Washington
www.ed.gov/pubs/chartacct/chartacct_toc_summ.pdf

Charter School Statistics and Research

National Charter School Directory
Center for Education Reform
www.edreform.com/pubs/

The State of Charter Schools 2000, Fourth Year Report
U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov/PDFDocs/4yrrpt.pdf

Survey of Charter Schools 2000-2001, Executive Summary
Center for Education Reform
www.edrefrom.com/pubs

What the Research Reveals about Charter Schools
Center for Education Reform
www.edreform.com/pubs

Curriculum Development

The Gateway to Educational Materials
A web site sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education
www.thegateway.org

Standards & Curriculum Resources and Organizations
Center for Education Reform
www.edreform.com/education_reform_resources/academic_standards.htm

Charter School Operations

A Guide for Developing a Business Plan for Charter Schools
Charter Friends National Network
www.charterfriends.org/guide.html

Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board
Charter Friends National Network
www.uscharterschools.org/gb/governance/

Personnel Policies and Practices: Understanding Employment Law
Charter Friends National Network
www.uscharterschools.org/gb/personnel/

Creating and Sustaining Family Friendly Charter Schools
Charter Friends National Network
www.uscharterschools.org/gb/familyfriendly/

Mobilizing and Motivating Staff to Get Results
Charter Friends National Network
www.uscharterschools.org/gb/motivatingstaff/

over

Facility Planning

Charter School Facilities - A Resource Guide on Development and Financing
NCB Development Corporation and Charter Friends National Network
www.ncbdc.org

Charter School Facilities Survey
Charter Friends National Network
www.charterfriends.org/facilities-survey.pdf

Out of the Box: Facilities Financing Ideas for Charter Schools
Charter Friends National Network
www.charterfriends.org/outofbox.html

Paying for the Charter Schoolhouse: A Policy Agenda for Charter Schools Facilities Financing
Charter Friends National Network
www.charterfriends.org/facilities.html

Funding

Accessing Federal Programs - A Guidebook for Charter School Operators and Developers
www.uscharterschools.org/gb/fed_funds/intro.htm

Budget, Finance, and Fundraising,
U.S. Department of Education web site
www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/ta/budget.htm

Charter Schools: Growth, Challenges, and Policy Options
Fitch Ratings
www.fitchratings.com

Moody's Methodology for Rating Charter Schools - A Growing Presence in the Market Place
Moody's Investor Service
www.moodys.com

Partnerships

Employer-Linked Charter Schools: An Introduction
Charter Friends National Network
www.employercharterschools.com/learn/pubs/masterbook.PDF

How Community-Based Organizations Can Start Charter Schools
Charter Friends National Network
www.uscharterschools.org/gb/community/index.htm

Charting a Clear Course: A Resource Guide for Building Successful Partnerships between Charter Schools and School Management Organizations
Charter Friends National Network
www.charterfriends.org/contracting.pdf

Planning Tools

If the Shoe Fits: A Guide for Charter Schools Thinking About Adopting a Comprehensive School Design
Charter Friends National Network
www.charterfriends.org/shoefits.html

Steps to Starting a Charter School
U.S. Department of Education
www.uscharterschools.org

The Charter School Workbook, Your Roadmap to the Charter School Movement
The Center for Education Reform, second edition
www.edreform.com/press/wkbkpr.htm

Special Education

Charter Schools and Special Education: A Guide for Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of Serving Students with Disabilities
Charter Friends National Network,
www.charterfriends.org/specialed.pdf

State Law Information

2001 Education Freedom Index
The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research
www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_24.htm

Charter School Laws: Scorecard and Ranking
Center for Education Reform,
www.edreform.com/charter_schools/laws/csranking01.pdf

THE CHARTER SCHOOL Experience

State-by-State Charter School Informational Resources and Technical Assistance

Alaska
Alaska Charter School Association
Palmer, AK
907-746-2358

Arizona
Arizona Charter School Association
Phoenix, AZ
602-564-7312
www.azcharters.org

Arizona Regional Resource Center
Tucson, AZ
520-294-6997 Ext: 2019
www.resourcenter.org/links.asp

Professional Alliance for Choice In Education
Phoenix, AZ
602-821-8741

Arkansas
Arkansas Charter Schools Association
Maumelle, AR
501-851-8142

California
California Network of Educational Charters
San Carlos, CA
650-654-6003
www.canec.org

Charter Schools Development Center
Sacramento, CA
916-278-6069
www.cacharterschools.org

Colorado
Colorado League of Charter Schools
Lakewood, CO
303-989-5356
www.coloradoleague.org

Connecticut
Connecticut Charter Schools Network
New Haven, CT
203-624-4552
www.ctcharterschools.org

Delaware
Delaware Charter Schools Network
Wilmington, DE
302-778-5999

District of Columbia
DC Public Charter School Cooperative
Washington, DC
202-296-5555

DC Public Charter School Resource Center
Washington, DC
202-835-9011
www.dccharttercenter.org

Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS)
Washington, DC
202-387-0405
www.focus-dccharter.org

Florida
Florida Charter School Resource Center
Tampa, FL
800-214-4247
www.ari.coedu.usf.edu/fcsrc/

Florida Consortium of Charter Schools
Ft. Lauderdale, FL
954-522-2997
www.fcae.nova.edu/charter/

Georgia
Georgia Charter School Association
Atlanta, GA
404-992-0130
www.gacharters.org

Georgia Public Policy Foundation
Atlanta, GA
404-256-4050
www.gppf.org/

Hawaii
Hawaii Association of Charter Schools
Kurtistown, HI
808-989-3007
www.k12.hi.us/~bwoerner/hacs/

Hawaii Charter School Resource Center
Hilo, HI
808-974-7583
www.uhh.hawaii.edu/~charter/

Idaho
Idaho Charter School Network
Pocatello, ID
208-478-2522
http://csi.boisestate.edu/icsn/

Illinois
Leadership for Quality Education
Chicago, IL
312-853-1206
www.lqe.org

Indiana
Charter School of Indiana Resource Center
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-464-2679
www.indianacharters.org

Iowa
Color Education with Common Sense Charter Schools
Cedar Rapids, IA
319-364-1447

Louisiana
Association of Professional Educators of Louisiana
Baton Rouge, LA
225-769-4005
www.apeleducators.org

Louisiana Charter Schools Association
Amite, LA
504-748-3989

Maine
Maine Association for Charter Schools
Hope, ME
207-763-3576
www.mainecharterschools.org

Maryland
Maryland Charter School Network
Columbia, MD
410-312-1662
www.myschoolonline.com/md/maryland_charter_school_network

Massachusetts
Massachusetts Charter Schools Association
Haydenville, MA
413-268-3361
www.masscharterschools.org

Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center
Boston, MA
617-723-2277
www.pioneerinstitute.org

Michigan
Metro Detroit Alliance for Charter Schools
Dearborn, MI
313-598-3344

Michigan Association of Public School Academies
Lansing, MI
517-374-9167
www.charterschools.org

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Minnesota
Minnesota Association of Charter Schools
St. Paul, MN
651-644-0031
www.mncharterschools.org

Minnesota Charter School Resource Center
Minneapolis, MN
612-626-1834
www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/handbook.htm

Mississippi
Hayes Cooper Center for Math, Science And Technology
Merigold, MI
601-748-2734

Missouri
Charter Schools Information Center
St. Louis, MO
314-726-6474
www.mocsic.org

The Learning Exchange
Kansas City, MO
816-751-4116
www.lx.org

Nebraska
Nebraska Charter School Coalition
Omaha, NE
402-558-4644

Nevada
Nevada Charter School Alliance
Sparks, NV
775-331-1261
www.ed-excellence.org

New Hampshire
NH Charter School Resource Center
Grantham, NH
603-863-4411

New Jersey
New Jersey Charter Public Schools Association
Newark, NJ
973-642-0101
www.njcpsa.org

New Jersey Charter School Resource Center
Newark, NJ
973-621-6467
www.cbsnj.org/csrc.htm

New Mexico
New Mexico Coalition of Charter Schools
Santa Fe, NM
505-995-8950

New York
Buffalo Niagra Partnership
Buffalo, NY
716-852-7100
www.thepartnership.org/charter_schools/

Center for Governmental Research
Rochester, NY
716-325-6360
www.cgr.org

Charter School Assistance Center
New Visions for Public Schools
New York, NY
212-645-5110 x3049
www.newvisions.org

New York Charter Schools Association
Albany, NY
518-465-4400

New York Charter School Resource Center
New York, NY
212-896-3901
www.nycharterschools.org

North Carolina
North Carolina League of Charter Schools
Chapel Hill, NC
919-967-1029
www.charterleague.org

Ohio
Dayton Education Resource Center
Dayton, OH
937-226-8282
www.educationresourcecenter.org

Lucas County Education Service Center
Toledo, OH
419-246-3137

Ohio Community Schools Association
Columbus, OH
614-778-0006

Ohio Community Schools Center
Columbus, OH
614-224-2647

Oregon
League of Oregon Charter Schools
Eugene, OR
541-988-0121

Oregon Charter School Service Center
Portland, OR
503-244-7523
www.oregoncharters.org

Pennsylvania
Drexel/FOUNDATIONS Technical Assistance Center for Charter Schools
Mt. Laurel, NJ
856-642-6330

Duquesne University Charter School Project
Pittsburgh, PA
412-396-4492
www.bus.duq.edu/Projects/Charter/default.html

Pennsylvania Charter Schools Resource Center
Philadelphia, PA
215-557-9919

Rhode Island
Rhode Island League of Charter Schools
Providence, RI
401-521-9433
www.richarterschools.com

South Carolina
South Carolina Charter School Association
Greenville, SC
864-250-8845

Tennessee
Charter School Resource Center of Tennessee
Memphis, TN
901-844-0046
www.tncharters.org

Texas
Association of Texas Charter Educators
Austin, TX 78701
512-583-3245

Charter School Resource Center of Texas
San Antonio, TX
210-348-7890
www.charterstexas.org

Utah
Utah Charter Schools Association
Salt Lake City, UT
801-596-8489

Vermont
Vermonters for Better Education
Rutland, VT
802-773-5240
www.schoolreport.com

Washington
Washington Charter School Resource Center
Seattle, WA
206-634-0589
www.wacharterschools.org

Wisconsin
Institute for the Transformation of Learning
Milwaukee, WI
414-288-1540
www.itl.mu.edu

Wisconsin Charter Schools Association
Middleton, WI
608-238-7491
www.wicharterschools.org

Wyoming
Wyoming Citizens for Educational Choice
Laramie, WY
307-742-6515

THE CHARTER SCHOOL Experience

State Department of Education Charter School Contacts

Federal
US Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Washington, DC
202-260-2641
www.uscharterschools.org/

Alaska
Alaska Department of Education
Juneau, AK
907-465-8720
www.educ.state.ak.us/Alaskan_Schools/charter/

Arizona
Arizona Department of Education
Phoenix, AZ
602-542-6511
www.ade.state.az.us/charterschools/search/

Arkansas
Arkansas Department of Education
Little Rock, AR
501-682-2009
www.arkedu.state.ar.us/charter_schools/charter_schools.htm

California
California Department Of Education
Sacramento, CA
916-327-5929
www.cde.ca.gov/charter/

Colorado
Colorado Department of Education
Denver CO
303-866-6700
www.cde.state.co.us/index_charter.htm

Connecticut
Connecticut State Department of Education
Hartford, CT
860-566-1233
www.state.ct.us/sde/charter/charter.htm

Delaware
Delaware Department of Public Information
Dover, DE
302-739-4885
www.doe.state.de.us/CharterSchools/charter_schools.htm

District of Columbia
District of Columbia Public Charter School Board
Washington, DC
202-887-5011
www.dcpubliccharter.com

D.C. Board of Education
Washington, DC
202-442-4289
www.k12.dc.us/dcps/

Florida
Florida Department of Education
Tallahassee, FL
850-414-0780
www.firn.edu/doe/bin00038/home0038.htm

Georgia
Georgia Department of Education
Atlanta, Georgia
404-656-4689
www.doe.k12.ga.us/charterschools/charterschools.html

Hawaii
Hawaii Department of Education
Honolulu, HI
808-586-3124
www.doe.k12.hi.us/charterschools.htm

Idaho
Idaho Department of Education
Boise, ID
208-332-6974
www.sde.state.id.us/instruct/charter/

Illinois
Illinois State Board of Education
Springfield, IL
217-782-3371
www.isbe.state.il.us/charter/default.htm

Kansas
Kansas Department of Education
Topeka, KS
785-296-3069
www.ksbe.state.ks.us/charter/chartindex.html

Louisiana
Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Baton Rouge, LA
225-219-4540
www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=CHARTER

Massachusetts
Massachusetts Department of Education
Boston, MA
617-727-0075
www.doe.mass.edu/charter

Mississippi
Mississippi Department of Education
Jackson, MS
601-359-3501
601-359-3501
www.mde.k12.ms.us/

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Missouri
Missouri Department of Education
Jefferson, MO
314-751-3175
www.dese.state.mo.us/divimprove/charterschools/index.html

Nevada
Nevada Department of Education
Carson City, NV
702-687-9158
www.nde.state.nv.us

New Hampshire
New Hampshire Department of Education
Concord, NH
603-271-2079
www.ed.state.nh.us/

Michigan
Michigan State Department of Education
Lansing, MI
517-373-4631
www.state.mi.us/mde/off/eocc/index.htm#CSPSA

Minnesota
Minnesota State Department of Education
St. Paul, MN
612-296-4213

New Jersey
New Jersey Department of Education
Trenton, NJ
609-292-5850
www.state.nj.us/njded/chartsch/

New Mexico
New Mexico State Department of Education
Santa Fe, NM
505-827-6576
www.sde.state.nm.us

New York
New York State Education Department
Albany, NY
518-473-7155
www.emsc.nysed.gov/topics/charter.html

New York City Board of Education
Brooklyn, NY
718-935-5814
www.nycenet.edu

North Carolina
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Raleigh, NC
919-715-1730
www.dpi.state.nc.us/charter_schools/maincharter.html

Ohio
Ohio Department of Education
Columbus, OH
614-466-2937
www.ode.state.oh.us/

Oregon
Oregon Department of Education
Salem, OR
503-378-3569
www.ode.state.or.us/cifs/charterschools/index.htm

Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Department of Education
Harrisburgh, PA
717-783-9781
www.pde.state.pa.us/charter_schools/site.default.asp

Rhode Island
RI Department of Education
Providence, RI
(401) 222-4600
www.ridoe.net/charterschools/default.htm

South Carolina
South Carolina Department of Education
Columbia, SC
803-734-8277
www.sde.state.sc.us/

Texas
Texas Education Agency
Austin, TX
512-463-9575
www.tea.state.tx.us/charter/

Utah
Utah State Office of Education
Salt Lake City, UT
801-538-7500
www.usoe.k12.ut.us/charterschools/

Wisconsin
Wisconsin Department of Education
Madison, WI
608-266-5728

Wyoming
Wyoming State Department of Education
Cheyenne, WY
307-777-6268
www.k12.wy.us/wdehome.html

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